

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 28<sup>th</sup> March 2013

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Young People and Families

**SUBJECT:** Purchase of U-Explore software licences for re-sale to Schools and providers

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To seek agreement to enter into a contract without conducting a tender exercise or seeking three written quotations in order to comply with procurement standing order 4.1 and 4.2, which places a requirement on the Council to invite quotations or tender for contracts with a value less than £173,934.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

**(1) The Operational Director for Children, Organisation and Provision be authorised to award the contract for 10 U-Explore software licences and 1 commercial licence to the contractor U-Xplore Limited for the sum of £12,600 (includes VAT) and shall be subject to three possible extensions of the contract by a period of upto one year for each extension running 2014/2015, 2015/2016 and 2016/2017. (Total spend over 4 maximum years: £50,400); and**

**(2) in light of the exceptional circumstances namely there being only one possible supplier of the service and in accordance with Procurement SO 1.8.3 Standing Orders 4.1 and 4.2 be waived on this occasion in view of U-Xplore Limited being the only supplier of the service and the collective agreement by Liverpool City Region to implement this software package jointly, which will support schools in delivering their new Careers Education, Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) responsibilities under the Education Act 2011.**

## **3.0 PERIOD OF WAIVER**

The period from the expiry of the call-in for this decision until the award of the contract by the Operational Director for Children, Organisation and Provision.

#### **4.0 BUDGET AND FUNDING APPROVAL**

The Post-16 and 14-19 Entitlement Strand Divisional budget.

#### **5.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

##### **5.1 BUSINESS CASE**

5.1.1 U-Explore is an unique innovative, online teaching and learning resource that is accessible 24/7 by learners, teachers and parents. It will support schools to deliver their new duty to secure access to independent and impartial careers guidance for pupils in years 9-11.

5.1.2 The duty came into effect in September 2012 and U-Explore has been introduced by schools from April/May 2012 to support this transition.

5.1.3 U-Explore uses media-rich applications such as video case studies, virtual tours and interactive skills logs to help learners make informed choices and decisions about their future. U-Explore delivers the Careers Education framework through:

- Video overviews of 14 industry sectors
- A Job Bank, which delivers information on hundreds of job roles via video case study interviews and text profiles outlining key duties, required skills and recommended progression paths and qualifications
- Jobcasts, which provide detailed video case studies of interviews with real employees and employers along with actual footage of them performing job role duties and responsibilities
- Interactive 360 virtual tours of real working environments
- Bank of real business profiles
- Team Work explains how departments and employees within real business work as a team

5.1.4 U-Explore navigator contains a vast bank of careers and employability resources delivered as 4 part lesson plans, accompanying handouts and PowerPoint presentations all downloadable and editable.

5.1.5 The software is web-based and is therefore accessible from anywhere by learners of all abilities. The system features industry information by sector and there is the potential, as Cheshire and Lancashire have, to tailor information to include local businesses.

5.1.6 U-Explore is exceptional in that Halton Borough Council will own all the search details and management information and will be able to analyse the jobs and sector areas of interest of young people. This would inform the direction of careers guidance and the planning and commissioning of educational services in the future. Establishments

can track cohorts of learners via the system for example potential NEET or borderline C/D grade learners.

## **5.2 VALUE FOR MONEY AND COMPETITION**

5.2.1 The Local Authorities within the Liverpool City Region are working in partnership to implement U-Explore across the City Region. This has brought economies of scale to the price of an annual U-Explore licence which has reduced from £2,160 to £1,140 including VAT and which will be sold onto schools in Halton for £1,200. The cost of the Commercial Licence is £1000. Following the introduction of the software to the Liverpool City Region in 2012 there is no other supplier other than U-Explore that offers this software.

5.2.2 As part of the contract Halton Borough Council also proposes that the Council purchase a Halton Commercial Licence for U-Explore. Gaining the commercial license ensures that any provider wanting to use U-Explore in the borough would have to purchase the system through the Borough Council ensuring that The Council remains the key stakeholder in the delivery of on-line careers information and guidance in the borough.

## **5.3 TRANSPARENCY**

5.3.1 This contract will be subject to issues of confidentiality and be open to scrutiny under the Freedom of Information Act, through the internal and external audit process and through the Policy & Performance Board scrutiny arrangements.

## **5.4 PROPRIETY AND SECURITY**

5.4.1 Integrity clauses will be built into the contract document and only staff with a need to know will have information about the contract.

## **5.5 ACCOUNTABILITY**

5.5.1 This will remain with the Operational Director awarding the contract and the internal and external audit process, and through scrutiny arrangements.

## **5.6 POSITION OF THE CONTRACT UNDER THE PUBLIC CONTRACTS REGULATIONS 2006**

5.6.1 The contract is subject to the Public Contracts Regulations 2006, however because the total value is £12,600 including VAT, which is below the threshold of £173,934, there is no requirement to go through a tendering process. However, the contract will be subject to the fundamental transparency and non-distortion of competition requirements.

## **6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Schools are responsible for securing access to independent and impartial careers guidance for pupils in years 9 to 11. This new duty came into force in September 2012 and will be extended down to Year 8 and up to Year 13 in September 2013.

6.2 Government expects that schools work in partnership with local authorities and external careers guidance providers to ensure that young people are appropriately supported, without the need for legislation. There is also an expectation that schools work in partnership with local authorities to ensure that vulnerable young people receive the support that they need, and that there will be local arrangements to ensure this partnership.

## **7.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

n/a

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **8.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

8.1.1 Up-to-date and widely available information on progression routes will assist young people in the borough to make informed decisions on future pathways to learning and employment.

### **8.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

8.2.1 See 8.1

### **8.3 A Healthy Halton**

n/a

### **8.4 A Safer Halton**

n/a

### **8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

n/a

## **9.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

9.1 There are no risks associated with product proprietary.

9.2 If we do not proceed there is a risk that up-to-date careers information may not be consistently available throughout the secondary schools. The licences will help to ensure that a comprehensive package of information and curriculum materials are accessible via the web for practitioners, young people and parents on future opportunities, skills and progression routes.

**10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

10.1 The U-Explore product is available to all and not limited to equality and diversity issues.

**11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Lord Hill's letter 17/02/2011	14-19 Team	14-19 Divisional Manager
Education Bill 15/11/2011	14-19 Team	14-19 Divisional Manager